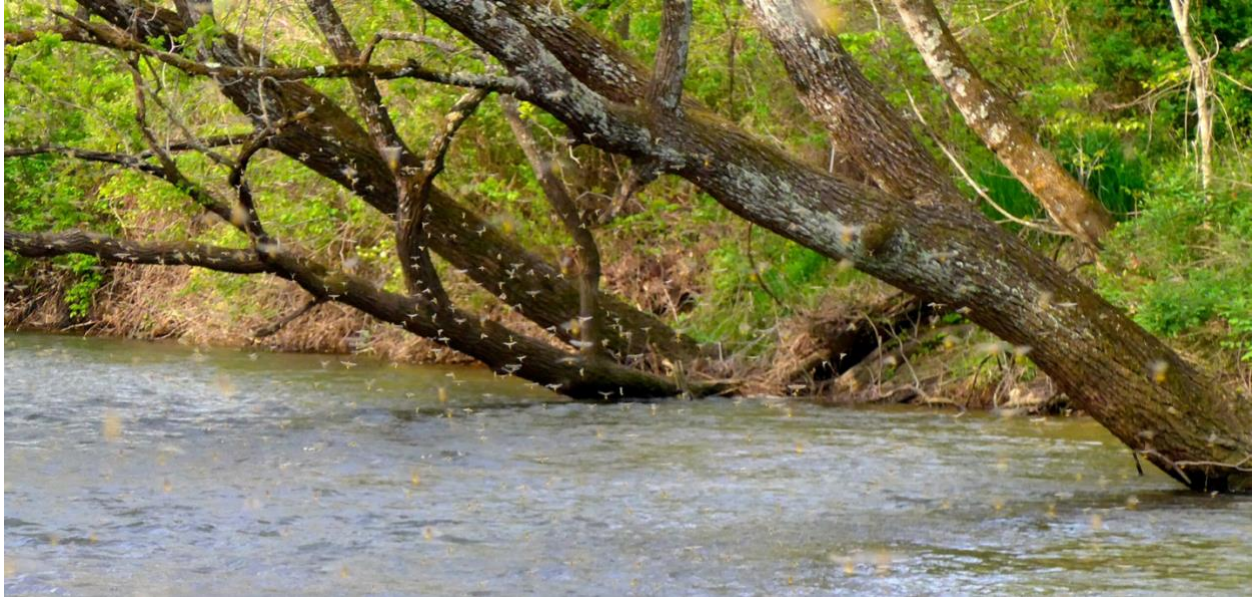




TU Western Driftless Hotline

Editorial by Carl Berberich



In last month’s newsletter we informed our subscribers about the petition MNTU filed to Minnesota’s Dept. of Agriculture on the use of Neonic treated seeds. This petition has been answered by the MDA.

“Minnesota Department of Agriculture Refuses to Protect State’s Environment From Pesticide Contamination”

Our Executive Director of MNTU, John Lenczewski states:

“Given the Department of Agriculture’s own data shows that concentrations of neonicotinoid pesticides in streams routinely exceed safe levels for aquatic insects, its claim to lack authority or resources to act is disappointing. Coldwater fisheries are being impacted by these dangerous insecticides while the MDA refuses to use its authority to keep these toxins out of public waters.”

Is the MDA protecting farming businesses or is it protecting businesses that support the farming businesses? According to research, it looks like Neonic treated seeds have not been shown to offer any overall economic benefit to farmers compared to untreated seeds. The increased cost of treated seeds is greater than any marginal increase yield. So.... It looks like the MDA is not protecting farming, but protecting agriculture related businesses, which is strange. They should

be supporting farming and the farming communities. This direction of MDA is also seen with the nitrate contamination of rural wells too. The MDA is only concerned with protecting the money produced by farming. They are not concerned with health of the communities and farm families. Additionally, if the use of Neonic treated seeds continue, we risk losing our trout streams in the Driftless area. If that happens, the fishing tourism businesses will also end, and so will the fly-fishing businesses here. This also includes the three southeast MNDNR fish hatcheries. Cause, why stock fish in these streams, when there is no food for them to survive with in our streams?

What can we do about this? We need to contact our state representatives and get them to tell the MDA to fix this issue. We can't let one business type rule our environment and our way of life cause if this happens, we will lose many other types of businesses in our area. Here is the link to the MNTU website <https://mntu.org/advocacy/no-hatches-to-match-whats-up-with-neonics/> that shows what is wrong with Neonic treated seeds

Hiawatha TU December

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

About 20 Hiawatha TU members and a few spouses ate, talked fishing, ate some dessert, talked more fishing and other sundry things, and ate some more at the annual holiday party Dec. 2 at the Olmsted County History Center.

It was rather informal, with TU providing pulled meat, buns and condiments while others brought salads, baked beans, and desserts, lots of desserts.

The highlight was drawing for door prizes that we've had for a long time. The top one was \$200 gift certificate to Scheels, followed by Johnny Walker Blue, some good Irish whiskey, vodka and the most - how shall we say this - interesting thing remained for last.

Todd Christenson's name was drawn and he eagerly picked up an eight-pack of small bottles of Jagermeister. In a grand gesture of sharing and giving, surely part of the holiday spirit, he offered to share the famous (or infamous) treat but only one person agreed.

With that, we broke up and headed home.



TCTU December News

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

A group of 32 anglers gathered in early December for TCTU's annual Winter Fish Camp at Whitewater State Park. The weather couldn't have been more perfect, and that made for great fishing. Over 3/4 of the group caught a fish -- a MUCH higher total than we saw last year! We had a few first-time anglers in the group, and a couple of them managed to get into fish as well. In addition to the fishing, the group ate well, too. Thank you to the 8 participants who entered the event's chili cookoff, and congratulations to our 2024 winner, Sally Noll. Sally's white chicken chili is the stuff of legend, and it has brought her the chili crown two years in a row!

Thank you to all of the people who donated time and material goods to make this event such a success. Those include:

- Organizers Caitlin Collins and Kristy Malecha from the Twin Cities Chapter.
- Cabela's for a generous donation of fly fishing rods, nets and other gear that was super helpful for both new and experienced anglers
- Paul Johnson and his daughter Holly for hours of fly tying demos and instruction, along with the generous donation of a few fly boxes.
- Vaughn Snook of the Minnesota DNR for a trout anatomy lesson (live dissection!) and update on the work done in the Driftless region over the past year.
- Mel Hayner of the Driftless Fly Fishing Company for donating an Orvis beginner rod/reel/line setup as a prize at the event. It went to a new angler who went straight out and hooked a fish on it Saturday afternoon!

Mark your calendars for the next one: December 5-7, 2025

Our next chapter meeting is December 23rd. Mike Hodgens will talk about how to create a "Do it Yourself Adventure in Greater Yellowstone". Our annual meeting and board elections will be on January 25th. You can sign up for the chapter meetings and other fun TCTU activities on our website events



page: <https://www.twincitiestu.org/events.html>

Win-Cres Happenings

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member

No meetings in the month of December but there is a meeting Wednesday, January 22 with Jim Melander presenting before he retires.

Reflecting on 10 Years of Winter Trout Fishing

By Jason Rieke



Angler Jack Sackett fishing on the winter trout opener. January 1, 2019

Minnesota Winter Trout Fishing History Winter trout fishing has a long history in SE Minnesota. The first waters that were open to winter angling from January 1st to the end of March were sections of the Middle Branch and South Branch Whitewater Rivers in 1988. Over the course of the next 25+ years, the list of fishable waters was periodically expanded until there were sections of roughly 32 streams and rivers. Then, on January 1st 2015, *all designated trout streams* in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona counties were opened to winter trout fishing. This change to the regulations dramatically increased the opportunities for anglers in the region. With the expansion of the fall C&R season from 9/15-9/30 to 9/15-10/15 the fall before, anglers who formerly could only fish from 4/1-9/30 could now fish any designated trout stream from 1/1-10/15, and we still can to this day.

A Decade of Winter Trout Fishing

The opening of the winter angling opportunities to all designated trout streams coincided with my freshman year at Winona State University, and the beginning of my fly fishing journey. I caught my first trout with a fly rod on January 3rd, 2015 in Rush Creek, and that first winter I fished close to 2 dozen different streams during the winter season. I fell in love with the challenge, solitude, and beauty of winter trout fishing, and that has carried on for the last decade.



First Trout on a fly, Jan 3, 2015



Jan 4, 2022

January 1st Tradition

For a few hardy friends and myself, it has become an annual tradition to fish the January 1st winter opener. Despite the conditions, we have fished on either the 1st or 2nd of January on 9/10 openers between 2015-2024. One opener was particularly brutal. When we left our college house in Winona on January 1st, 2018, it was -12°F , and the temps that day never crept above 0°F . We fished hard when we could stand the cold and when we couldn't, we spent a lot of time in the car warming up. We managed to catch a few trout without losing any of our digits to frostbite. Outside of 2018, the weather on opening day has actually been surprisingly pleasant with temperatures in the upper 20's. There has also been snow on the ground every year with the least amount of snow being this last opener in 2024.

Winter Fun

Outside of the January 1st opener, the winter season has treated us well with quality fish. Early on, it became apparent to us that trout can still be very

aggressive in the winter, and it is a good time of year to target bigger fish. Over the years, we have occasionally caught some of our biggest fish of the season

during the first week of January.

I for one am very excited for this upcoming 2025 winter. To no surprise of those who know my friends and I well enough, we have a January 1st trip all planned out and already to go. If you haven't fished here in the winter, make 2025 your year to brave the winter elements and enjoy some of the best days of trout fishing that the driftless area of SE MN has to offer.

Fly of The Month: Ice Dub Pheasant Tail

By Lance Prado, HTU Board Member



This is a super effective trout pattern that works all year long. I like these tied in a size 16 with a 3.0mm tungsten bead but they can be altered to your liking.

Ingredients

Umpqua Jig Hook #16

3.0mm insta jig bead

S gold wire

Pheasant Tail

Peacock ice dubbing

<https://youtu.be/2jgvYxJOpE4?si=mE3SoVFywH9cDKa0>

Monthly Fishing Report

Lanesboro MN: [Root River Rod Co](#)

The Lanesboro area received a fresh 5+ inches of snow and it is more beautiful than ever. Temperatures are going to be climbing and fishing will be great. We now mainly nymphing for trout they have really moved into the slower deeper water and for most parts of the day they are hanging close to the bottom. Scuds and midges are now the go to flies along with small black pheasant tails. Small streamers are also effective during the winter with slow retrieves.

Flies:

Orange or Pink Scuds #18-14

Black Pheasant Tails #18-16

Black or Red Midges #22-18

Black Leech #12-8

Upcoming Events Schedule:

TCTU Chapter meeting will be held on December 23rd with Mike Hodgens talking about fishing the Yellowstone area

Hiawatha TU Meeting: January 6, 7pm at the 125 Live in Rochester with Tom and Christie Atwell, who will talk about some of their trout fishing adventures at home and abroad

WinCres TU Chapter Meeting: Jan 22, with DNR Jim Melander

Resources:

[SE Stream Conditions](#) (MN DNR)

[State Map Trout Streams](#) (MN DNR)

[Southeast Streams](#) (MN DNR)

[AMA](#) (MN DNR Aquatic Management Areas)

[WMA](#) (MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

[SNA](#) (MN DNR Scientific and Natural Areas)

[State Forest](#) (MN lands)

[Driftless Hatch Chart](#) (Driftless Region)

[MN DNR Fish Kills Reporting](#) (or call 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798)

[Trout-In-the-Classroom Map](#) (School Locations in MN)

[Wisconsin DNR Trout Streams](#)

[Iowa DNR Driftless Trout Stream Maps](#)

[IA WMA](#) (IA DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

[HTU's Iowa Driftless Stream Map](#)

HTU Website: <https://hiawatha-tu.org>

TCTU Website: <https://www.twincitiestu.org/>

TCTU Events: <https://www.twincitiestu.org/events.html>

Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota Website: <https://flyfishingwomenmn.com/>

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